

CLAIMS

We claim:

1 1. A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a
2 recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech
3 converted from text created by the sender, the method comprising:
4 receiving at least one image from the sender;
5 associating each at least one image with a tag;
6 presenting the sender with options to insert the tag associated with one of the at
7 least one image into the sender text; and
8 after the sender inserts the tag associated with one of the at least one images into
9 the sender text, delivering the multi-media message with the at least one image presented
10 as background to the animated entity according to a position of the tag associated with
11 the at least one image in the sender text.

1 2. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a
2 recipient of claim 1, wherein delivering the multi-media message further comprises
3 presenting the at least one image as background when a word prior to the position of the
4 tag associated with the at least one image is presented by the animated entity.

1 3. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a
2 recipient of claim 1, wherein the at least one image is a static image.

1 4. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a
2 recipient of claim 1, wherein the at least one image is a video.

1 5. A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a
2 recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech
3 converted from text created by the sender, the method comprising:
4 storing a group of predefined images;
5 associating each predefined image with a tag;

6 presenting the sender with options to insert a tag associated with one of the
7 group of predefined images into the sender text; and
8 after the sender inserts the tag associated with one of the group of predefined
9 images into the sender text, delivering the multi-media message with the image associated
10 with the inserted tag presented as background to the animated entity according to a
11 position of the tag within the sender text.

1 6. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a
2 recipient of claim 5, further comprising:

3 receiving at least one sender-created image;
4 associating each at least one sender-created image with a sender-image tag;
5 presenting the sender with an option to insert a sender-image tag associated with
6 one of the at least one sender-created images into the sender text; and
7 after the sender inserts the sender-image tag associated with one of the at least
8 one sender-created images into the sender text, delivering the multi-media message with
9 the sender-created image associated with the inserted sender-image tag presented as
10 background to the animated entity according to a position of the sender-image tag within
11 the sender text.

1 7. A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a
2 recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech
3 converted from text created by the sender, the method using stored predefined images
4 having associated image tags and stored sender-created images having associated sender-
5 created tags, the method comprising:

6 presenting the sender with options to insert image tags and sender-created tags
7 into the sender text; and
8 after the sender inserts the image tag or sender-created tags, delivering the multi-
9 media message with the predefined images or sender-created images associated with the

10 inserted image tags and/or sender-created tags presented as background to the animated
11 entity according to a position of the respective tag within the sender text.

1 8. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a
2 recipient of claim 7, wherein the predefined images or sender-created images are
3 displayed as background to the animated entity as soon as a predetermined number of
4 words prior to the position of the respective tag within the sender text begins to be
5 delivered.

1 9. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a
2 recipient of claim 7, wherein the predefined images are either static images or video
3 images.

1 10. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a
2 recipient of claim 9, wherein the sender-created images are either static images or video
3 images.

1 11. A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a
2 recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech
3 converted from text created by the sender, the method using stored images having
4 associated image tags, the method comprising:

5 presenting the sender with options to insert image tags into the sender text;
6 presenting the sender with options to position the animated entity in any location
7 on a display screen using animated entity position tags; and
8 after the sender inserts the image tags and animated entity position tags,
9 delivering the multi-media message with the images associated with the inserted image
10 tags presented as background to the animated entity according to a position of the
11 respective tag within the sender text and wherein the position of the animated entity
12 during the delivery of the multi-media message is associated with the animated entity
13 position tags.

12. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a recipient of claim 11, wherein the stored images are static and/or video images.

13. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a recipient of claim 12, further comprising:

presenting the sender with an option to remove the animated entity from the display screen using an animated entity remove tag; and

if the sender inserts the animated entity remove tag, delivering the multi-media message with the images associated with the inserted image tags presented as background while removing the animated entity according to a position of the animated entity remove tag within the sender text.

14. A method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a recipient, the multi-media message having an animated entity audibly presenting speech converted from text created by the sender, the method using stored video segments having associated video tags, the method comprising:

presenting the sender with options to insert stored video segment tags into the sender text; and

if the sender inserts one or more video segment tags in the sender text, delivering the multi-media message with the video segments associated with the inserted video tags presented as background to the animated entity according to a position of the respective video tag within the sender text.

15. The method of customizing a multi-media message created by a sender for a recipient of claim 14, wherein the stored video segments are non-sender-created and optionally sender-created, each having their associated video tags, and wherein presenting the sender with options to insert stored video segment tags into the sender text further comprises presenting the sender with options to insert stored video segment tags associated with non-sender-created video segments and, if stored, presenting the sender

with options to insert video segments tags associated with sender-created video segments.

16. A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient, the multi-media message including an animated entity for delivering a message having text, the method comprising:

providing the sender with a group of customizable multi-media message templates, each template of the groups of templates including predefined parameters comprising a predefined text message, a predefined animated entity, a predefined background, predefined background music, and a predefined set of emoticons within the text of the message; and

if the sender chooses a customizable multi-media message template, presenting the sender with options to change any of the predefined parameters.

17. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of claim 16, wherein once the sender customizes the multi-media message template, if at all, the method further comprises delivering the multi-media message to the recipient.

18. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of claim 16, wherein presenting the sender with options to change any of the predefined parameters further comprises presenting the user with an option to add the name of the recipient to the multi-media message.

19. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of claim 16, wherein presenting the sender with options to change any of the predefined parameters further comprises presenting the user with an option to choose from a list of predefined and/or sender-added options for each of the template parameters for customizing the multi-media message.

20. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of claim 16, wherein presenting the sender with options to change any of the predefined

parameters further comprises presenting the user with an option to choose at least one position from which the animated entity will deliver the message.

21. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of claim 20, wherein presenting the user with an option to choose at least one position from which the animated entity will deliver the message further comprises presenting the user with an option to control animated entity entrance and departure features.

22. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of claim 16, further comprising presenting the user with an option to modify a camera position using camera control tags within the text.

23. A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient, the multi-media message including an animated entity for delivering a message having text, the method comprising:

providing the sender with options to choose an animated entity from a group of animated entities;

once the sender chooses an animated entity to deliver the message, presenting the sender with options to add accessories to the animated entity; and

once the sender chooses accessories to add to the animated entity, if any, delivering the multi-media message to the recipient.

24. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of claim 23, wherein presenting the sender with options to add accessories to the animated entity further comprises presenting the sender with options to add accessories comprising glasses, ear rings, hats, shirts, hair color, hair style, and facial hair.

25. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of claim 23, wherein presenting the sender with options to add accessories to the animated entity further comprises presenting the sender with a list of accessories, the list of

4 accessories including accessories provided by a multi-media message service provider and
5 accessories added by the sender.

1 26. The method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient of
2 claim 23, wherein upon the sender choosing accessory options, presenting the sender
3 with a preview of the animated entity with the chosen accessory options.

1 27. A method of sending a multi-media message from a sender to a recipient, the
2 multi-media message including an animated entity for delivering a message having text,
3 the method comprising:

4 providing the sender with options to choose an animated entity from a group of
5 animated entities;

6 providing the sender with options to insert emoticons in the text of the message;

7 providing the sender with options to modify an amplitude of emoticons inserted
8 in the text of the message;

9 once the sender chooses emoticons to add to the animated entity, if any,
10 delivering the multi-media message to the recipient.

1 28. The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 27, further comprising:

2 if the sender modifies the amplitude of emoticons inserted in the text, changing
3 the appearance of the modified emoticons in the text of the message to reflect the
4 change in amplitude for each modified inserted emoticon.

1 29. The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 28, wherein the
2 appearance of the modified emoticons comprises changing the modified emoticon from
3 a black on white background to black on colored background.

1 30. The method of sending a multi-media message of claim 29, wherein the
2 appearance of the modified emoticons relates to an intensity of the modified amplitude.